



COUNCIL – AGENDA REPORT

Meeting Date: 5 November 2024
Subject: Automated garbage collection program
Directorate: Community Infrastructure

Issue:

Council is being presented with an updated automated garbage collection program, which includes current program cost estimates, results of the most recent resident engagement on the automated garbage program, and a service level recommendation and is also being asked to endorse the revised garbage collection program, as presented.

Policy / Council Direction:

At the November 6 Regular Council Meeting, Council was provided with the results of the black cart survey. Council received the report for information and directed staff to return in 2024 with information regarding:

- Automated garbage collection
- Variable garbage cart sizes
- Variable rate structure reflective of garbage cart sizes
- Biweekly or weekly collection
- Two collection days per week; and
- A medical exemption program.

Background:

In April, a Request for Information (RFI) was published to obtain updated pricing on an automated garbage collection program. Based on 2024 pricing, changing from a manual to an automated collection program has an estimated yearly increase between \$8 and \$22 per household (\$0.62 - \$1.73 per billing cycle). The rate for automated collection includes cost assumptions for ongoing expenses for cart maintenance and growth, and repayment to the waste management reserve for capital cart investment.

| 2024 Rates | Manual rate | Automated rate (estimated) |
|------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|
| Cost per billing cycle | \$ 9.28 | \$ 9.90 - \$ 11.01 |

Resident engagement

Administration conducted additional resident engagement to determine if there was still support for an automated garbage program with increased cost. The Involve Airdrie platform was used to engage residents on the recommended automated program; 2043 responses were received.

Of the respondents, 75 per cent said they would be interested in an automated garbage program understanding there will be a cost increase of \$ 1 – 2 per billing cycle. Survey participants were also asked to provide feedback on what they liked, disliked, or would improve for each service level of the recommended automated garbage program. Respondents largely liked the recommendations for weekly collection frequency, maintaining the excess waste tag program and maintaining the medical and diaper exemption programs. Fewer participants liked the recommendation for a standardized cart size for all households. The What We Heard Report provided in Attachment #2 shows a detailed breakdown of responses received from the public.

Service level recommendation

Taking into consideration feedback obtained through resident engagement, Administration is recommending the following service delivery model change. While public input was split between a standardized cart and a variable cart size with variable rate program, Administration recommends that a standardized cart be implemented at the onset, and variable cart sizes and rates be considered once residents have had an opportunity to adopt the new program.

Administration evaluated various service level models that took into consideration resident feedback and industry best practices. Alternative program options are provided in Attachment 1.

| | Current program | Automated program |
|---|--|---------------------------------|
| Garbage volume | 25kg limit 90cm x 127 cm limit (120L) | 120L |
| Collection frequency | Weekly | Maintained as currently offered |
| Cost per billing cycle (based on 2024 rates) | \$ 9.28 | \$ 9.90 - \$ 11.01 |
| Excess waste tag program | Up to three additional bags with an excess waste tag | Maintained as currently offered |
| Medical exemption program | Households with a medical condition can apply for a medical exemption | Maintained as currently offered |
| Diaper exemption program | Households with two or more children under four can apply for a diaper exemption | Maintained as currently offered |

Timeline

The RFI also requested information on industry recommended timelines for implementation. Collection companies identified that a minimum 12-month preparation period would be needed from once the contract is awarded to ensure vehicles and staffing meet the City's needs. Accordingly, if an automated garbage program were endorsed by Council, Administration estimates that the program would commence in Quarter 2, 2026.

Next steps

The 2023 black cart survey and 2024 resident engagement have demonstrated resident support for an automated garbage program and insight to inform and define the recommended program presented. Once a decision for waste collection is made by Council, Administration can move forward with a formal marketplace competition. If an automated program is endorsed, Waste and Recycling Services will further educate residents on the upcoming changes and timelines.

Council Committee Routed Through:

At the September 10, 2024 Community Infrastructure and Strategic Growth Standing Committee meeting, members unanimously supported Administrations recommendation that Council support the revised garbage collection program with the following considerations.

1. The black cart use parameters (like mandatory bagging) through bylaw is part of the program;
 - Concern that litter would continue to be a challenge as results of loose material in carts.
 - Proposed changes to the waste bylaw will include requirements to manage loose material in carts.
2. More information about environmental aspects;
 - Discussion on whether residents are aware of environmental challenges and the potential for reduced diversion within an automated program.
 - Environmental aspects will be included as part of WRS communication and education strategies for the roll-out of the automated program
3. Logistics of pick-ups in areas with cul-de-sacs, zero lot lines, etc.:
 - Concerns with challenges collecting two carts on the same day and space required to set-out carts.
 - Staff will work with the collection contractor to identify best practices that address space challenges
4. Manual vs. automated collection and rationale for both; and
 - Through the RFI process, respondents identified that services could include manual collection of excess waste set out next to the cart in an automated garbage program.
5. Explanation of how garbage that has been scattered from carts is managed.
 - Administration is aware that the issue with materials blowing around is a common challenge with recycling programs, learnings from local municipalities has shown that it does present the same challenge within automated garbage programs.

- The City uses a multi-pronged process that includes internal and external resources to address scattered garbage identified to Administration.

Administration Recommendation:

That Council endorses the revised garbage collection program that includes the following service levels:

- Automated garbage collection,
- Standard 120L cart,
- Weekly collection,
- Excess waste tag program,
- Medical exemption program,
- Diaper exemption program.

Alternatives/Implications:

1. Council could choose to table and request additional information from Administration and return to a Council meeting at a later date.

Council's decision on future waste programs is required for the department to move forward with new collection contracts. Should a Council decision be deferred, the time required to implement contract and program changes could be delayed beyond current contract extension options.

2. Council could choose to endorse an alternative revised garbage collection program as outlined in Attachment #1.

All alternative programs outlined in the Attachment are accepted by Administration.

3. Council could choose to accept the report for information and maintain current service levels.

Collection companies have been discontinuing their manual collection service and focusing investments into automated collection vehicles, limiting options to maintain a manual program. This alternative also does not take into consideration the majority view of community stakeholders. Residents will not feel heard or that their input has been considered in decision making.

Budget Implications:

The cost to implement the automated garbage program will be captured as part of the City's annual budget process for 2026.

Communications and Engagement:

Staff will continue to work with Communications, Engagement and Marketing to inform residents of upcoming changes to the garbage collection program and develop a transition and implementation communication strategy to ensure residents are aware program changes.

Recommendation:

That Council endorses the revised garbage collection program that includes the following service levels:

- Automated garbage collection;
- Standard 120L cart;
- Weekly collection;
- Excess waste tag program;
- Medical exemption program; and
- Diaper exemption program.

Leanne Moreira

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| Staff Presenter: | L. Moreira |
| External Presenter: | N/A |
| Department: | Waste & Recycling Services |
| Reviewed by: | L. Stevens |
| Attachments: | #1: Alternative program options #2: What we heard report |